

## So you think your SME is too small for work experience?

'We'd love to do work experience, but I'm afraid the company is just not big enough' is something that the Work Experience Co-ordinators at MEBP hear most days when speaking to SMEs in Kent and Medway. **John Long, proprietor of Sitech Industrial Services**, a small welding and fabrication company based in Gillingham, is here to let other SME owners know that not only can they support students by taking them on work experience; it can also benefit them and their companies.

One of the matters weighing on John's mind as a small business owner is the lack of young people entering his industry. Most of John's six employees have been in the industry from a young age, and will be looking to retire in the not too distant future, with no experienced, younger, workforce to step in and fill the gaps. By taking students on work experience, John feels he is allowing the younger generations not only to experience his own business, but also to enthuse them about the industry in general and perhaps encourage them to begin a career in it. That way, not only does Sitech benefit in the short-term but the industry, and therefore others similar business, benefit in the long-term.

In order to prove his point, John explains that one of his ex work experience pupils is about to start at Sitech as an apprentice. John was so impressed with the student's performance during her five day placement that he's taking her on. This may be a rare career choice for a girl, but as John says, "she's one of the best I've seen", and having a female in such an industry may encourage others to look at career options they may never before have thought possible.



**An example of the work completed by a student.**

As to those who say that they can't afford to support work experience, or don't have time for the paperwork? – "It's no more hard work than when you take on a proper employee" says John, "and costs you nothing except a little bit of time". Time which John clearly feels is well spent and necessary for the future of his business and industry as a whole.

If you would like to follow in John's stead and find out more about how your company might become involved, contact Dawn Jansen on 01634 204995 or email [dawn@mebp.co.uk](mailto:dawn@mebp.co.uk)